

When it just has to get there CB Transportation revs up



CURT HUDSON

Carole Borden of CB Transportation in her home office in Chester Springs, with her computers screens at the ready.

CHESTER SPRINGS — It was December of last year, and Carole Borden was tracking a massive blizzard bound for Philadelphia.

“It was our storm of all storms,” said Borden, owner of CB Transportation. “It was rolling in at night, and we knew it was going to be a problem.”

Then she got a call. QVC, the home shopping network in West Chester, had a product airing on television the next day and needed the goods moved from

The management services company relies on a staff of dispatchers and logistical technology

SONJA SHERWOOD
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Philadelphia to Virginia, immediately.

“Normally, this is a routine move, but in this case, there wasn’t a truck to be found,” recalled Borden. “Everybody in the country knew Philadelphia was getting hit by a storm and the companies won’t send their trucks in because they know they’ll get stuck.”

Borden’s transportation management service company relies on a staff of dispatchers and logistical and communications technology to manage a network of trucks for hire. She

CB TRANSPORTATION: Management services company has customers nationwide

tapped her network, found an available truck in Virginia, and got it into Philadelphia, loaded up, and out of town with less than an hour to spare before snow began falling.

That's the kind of service that has taken CB Transportation from a \$2 million operation in 2006 to \$8.1 million in revenue last year.

"Complete customer dedication is the best way to explain CB Transportation," said Matt Arnold, director of inbound logistics for QVC. "Every time we have a need, or a last-minute request or something out of the ordinary — or just handling day-to-day business — she and the company are agile and quick to react."

Because Borden doesn't operate a fleet of her own, success depends on who she knows and how willing they are to take her call.

It helps that she pays right away. She maintains a float of between \$500,000 and \$750,000 to ensure that she can pay carriers within 15 to 20 days of a delivery, closer to 15.

Her dispatchers work off remote servers from home offices around the country. They carry Blackberries and laptops at all times and are at clients' beck and call almost 24/7 because trucks run at all hours, moving everything from high-end electronics to ice cream to hazardous material.

"At CB if you call me on the weekend, you're not going to get a dispatcher who doesn't know your account," Borden said.

Borden chanced into the transportation industry as a young woman in the '80s. She grew up in a part of Wyndmoor that is now Glenside, and got a degree in retail management marketing from Philadelphia University. After a stint in Los Angeles doing a co-op she returned to Philadelphia and took a job with the Yellow Freight trucking company.

"I think I was a novelty," she said. "Let's send the young girl out and see what she can do."

She was in her 20s, making good money, and had a corporate credit card. Her task was to take prospective clients out on the town and get them to like her.

UP CLOSE

COMPANY: CB Transportation, Chester Springs

OWNER: Carole Borden

TYPE OF COMPANY:

Transportation management and logistic services with truck, rail and warehouse resources.

WEBSITE: www.cbtransportation.com

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 6,

with plans to add 2 more soon

2007 REVENUE: \$4 million

2008 REVENUE: \$7.6 million

2009 REVENUE: \$8.1 million

LESSONS LEARNED: "The

secret to our success is that we listen to our clients. I'm trying to penetrate a multitude of Fortune 500 companies, and the secret is understanding your clients come first and to be there to offer that unexpected customer service all the time."

Carole Borden with promotional notepads, which are cradled on shipping pallets.



CURT HUDSON

"It was kind of a dream job for a kid," she said. "I knew all the maitre d's all over Philadelphia. [...] Once I was in the business for a while, it was difficult to say, 'Gee, I'll do something more glamorous.'"

She collected her share of hair-raising stories, she says. "But I learned how to keep people focused on business and laugh through the innuendos and the 'you knows' — and get the business."

After 12 years with Yellow Freight, she joined a transportation services startup in Boston as vice president of sales. But after a while, she started to feel a little like the industry had gotten "not so clean," she said. She decided she could build a better mousetrap.

"What you see is what you get with me," she said. "I'm very honest and upfront and

I like to handle my business relations that way."

Close to 10 of the customers she'd cultivated over the years, including QVC, stuck with her when she formed her own company. She now has around 50 clients across the country and plans to increase revenue by \$30 million to \$50 million in the next three to four years. She's currently shopping around for a chief operating officer to help with future growth, which has happened organically all along.

"CB is me, it's not some big company in the sky, it's me," Borden said. "Initially, my house was on the line. Everything that I handled and we did I had a very, very vested interest in. I still do and my team knows it and we treat everything as though it was our own."